GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3430
ANSWERED ON:17.08.2005
PROTECTING INDIANS IN MALAYSIA
Badiga Shri Ramakrishna

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Malaysian employer forcibly cut the hair of a few Sikh employees as reported in the Asian Age dated July 11, 2005;

(b) if so, the facts thereof;

(c) whether the Government has taken up the matter with Malaysia;

(d) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(e) the steps being taken to protect the religious sentiments of Sikhs in Malaysia?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) & (b) Yes, Sir. Eighteen Indian workers from Punjab, recruited by a company called JUJU Power Sdn Bhd, came to Malaysia in April 2004. They were sub-contracted to another company PSEB Electronics Sdn Bhd. The workers were reportedly subjected to humiliation and deprived of food and money legitimately due to them. The employer also allegedly forced three of the Sikh workers to cut their hair and forbade them from wearing their turban. Though they worked for four months, there were not paid their wages. The Indian workers escaped from further abuse of the employer and took shelter in a Gurudwara in August, 2004.

(c),(d)&(e) On being informed, a Consular Officer from the Indian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur visited them on 5.8.2004 in the Gurudwara. The High Commissioner also met them during the second week of August 2004 and assured them of all possible assistance. The matter was taken up with the Malaysian Foreign Office on 28th August, 2004, expressing our grave concern over the incident and seeking their urgent intervention for the redressal of the grievances of the Indian nationals. Eleven of the workers have since returned to India during the amnesty period declared by the Malaysian Government. A case that was earlier filed in the Labour Court in Malaysia against the employer is still pending. The hearing has been postponed several times with the Malaysian employer pleading illness and even getting herself admitted to the hospital. The matter has been again taken up with the Malaysian Foreign Office reiterating the need to protect the religious sentiments of the Sikhs. The High Commissioner has also personally met the Malaysian authorities concerned to underline the seriousness with which the Government of India views this incident and to request them to expedite the process of redress.